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Letter dated 19 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith information on the measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to ensure social stability and preserve the true essence and content of the sacred religion of Islam (see annex).

I would appreciate if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 14.

(*Signed*) Bakhtiyor **Ibragimov**

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Annex to the letter dated 19 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to ensure social stability, preserve the true essence and content of the sacred religion Islam

In Uzbekistan the further development of social and spiritual sphere, strengthening the healthy atmosphere in families, makhallas (self-governing bodies) and entire society, the task of upbringing the youth, safeguarding peaceful and tranquil life, as well as purity of sacred religion — Islam, are currently acquiring ever enormous significance. These very issues define Uzbekistan's both today and tomorrow, the fate and the current future generation.

In order to take Uzbekistan's progress up to a new level the Government has adopted an Action Strategy for Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 which is currently being implemented.

This Strategy is deeply penetrating each sphere and branch of Uzbekistan's life. It acquires special significance given the announcement of 2017 in Uzbekistan as "The Year of Dialogue and Human Interests".

As practical steps in this direction, the Public Receptions and Virtual Receptions (over the Internet) of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan were established.

Over the short period of time these structures are turning into an institution playing an important role among the people of Uzbekistan in terms of addressing citizen's needs and demands.

Since the launch of the Public Receptions and Virtual online Receptions, nearly 890.000 citizens from across the nation have filed their appeals. 93 per cent of them were studied and have been addressed. The rest of the appeals are now being considered by specialists. Almost 80-90 per cent of appeals addressed by citizens of Uzbekistan are justified and pertinent.

Maintaining the dialogue with people and ensuring human interests has become a priority direction of state policy and it is not merely a temporary campaign. This issue will always remain in the focus of attention of the Government of Uzbekistan.

Another important institution in this direction — the Office of the State Adviser to President for Protecting Citizens' Rights, Supervising and Coordinating the Work with Appeals of Physical and Legal entities, was established in Uzbekistan.

At present officials of this Office are organizing field sessions at the local level — the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions and the city of Tashkent. Along with the representatives of local bodies of governance they are reviewing citizens' appeals and addressing them within a legal framework.

All works and reforms are aimed at safeguarding peace and tranquillity of Uzbekistan, raising the people's well-being and bringing up children healthy and harmoniously developed mature persons.

Uzbekistan is a multinational and multi-faith state. At present, the representatives of more than 130 nationalities and ethnicities are residing in the country as one family in accord and mutual consent. No doubt, the traditions of

tolerance and magnanimity, which pertain to people of Uzbekistan from of the time immemorial, are playing an important role in this regard.

The following is a good example as a historical confirmation of this truth. The mausoleum of the Prophet Daniel, which was built during the time of Amir Temur in Samarkand, is equally revered by those who profess Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

For many centuries people of Uzbekistan have been safeguarding this sacred site, taking care of it and showing respect and esteem to it.

This example alone pinpoints to the fact that nobility, benevolence and true magnanimity make up the core of people's nature and mentality.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan and national legislature provide for equal rights and freedoms for all citizens irrespective of their nationality, language and religion. They fully enjoy all opportunities to safeguard and comprehensively develop their own culture, customs and traditions.

One of the directions of the Action Strategy, adopted by the Government in February this year provides for the most important tasks in terms of ensuring international accord and religious tolerance. 138 national cultural centres play an important role in extending the ethnic uniqueness and further harmonizing the international relations in Uzbekistan. Recently an important decision on bringing up these centres to a new level and with an aim of further developing the cultural friendship ties with foreign countries has been adopted. According to it, the Committee for international relations and friendship ties with foreign countries was established on the basis of the Republican International Center.

Since the outset of Independence, a priority attention has been accorded to ensuring freedom of conscience. In particular, significant work has been carried out in terms of restoring sacred religion of Islam, national values, legacy and heritage of great saints of Uzbekistan and bettering their resting places.

The following is a good example for the purposes of comparison. If about 80 mosques operated in Uzbekistan before independence, at the present time their number reached 2042.

In the past only a few people in Uzbekistan did have a chance to make a holy pilgrimage. In the years of Independence annually more than 5000 people from Uzbekistan make a hajj pilgrimage. This year alone 7200 of citizens of Uzbekistan will have an opportunity to make a holy pilgrimage. In addition, public-at-large freely studies history of religion and heritage of great Uzbek scholars. For example, a great scholar and renowned representative of the Moturidiya teaching, Abu Muin Nasafiy, who lived in Kashkadarya and studied in Bukhara and Samarkand, wrote about 15 books on the knowledge of Kalam — the purity of Islamic faith. 1000 years ago in his books he showed a true path for those who had gone astray in religious matters.

The Government of Uzbekistan has comprehensively bettered the eternal resting place of great scholar of hadith[1] Isa Termiziy in Surkhandarya Region.

The Government is planning to establish a complex at the mausoleum of country's forefather Nasafiym, as well as to translate and publish the books of this great scholar.

[1] *Hadith* — the statements of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), i.e. his sayings, deeds and approvals, etc.

The Government has already begun similar works in Bukhara — in Bakhauddin Naqshband's resting place, in Tashkent — the Mosque named after Imam Termiziy and Suzuk ota Mausoleum.

Currently the necessary measures are being implemented to raise the prestige and status of famous Mir Arab Madrassah[2] by improving its material and technical basis, overhauling the local ancient buildings and bettering the surrounding territory.

Uzbekistan's land is considered to be one of the ancient cradles of Islamic science and culture. With an aim of comprehensively studying such rich historical, scientific and spiritual heritage of people of Uzbekistan, broadly promoting it among the world public, and most importantly, revealing in-depth the humane nature of the religion of Islam, the Government has resolved to establish a Center for Islamic Culture in Uzbekistan to be placed in the capital city of Tashkent under the slogan "Enlightenment against ignorance".

It is envisaged to establish this Center at the territory of famous Khastimom Complex, and exhibit the rich information about the great Islamic scholars and thinkers, renowned poets and writers, artists and calligraphs, who were born on the land of Uzbekistan and made an unforgettable contribution to the development of world culture. This complex will combine the museum and library rich with rare exhibits. Along with this, the broad science and research activities will also be carried out here.

Visitors to this venue will be able to learn at a time about both life and activity of tens of brightest minds of Islamic world. For example, the samples of priceless heritage of such revered and saint individuals as Imam Bukhariy, Imam Termiziy, Imam Moturidiy, Abu Muin Nasafiy, Najmiddin Kubro, Makhmud Zamakhshariy, Bakhouddin Nakshband, Khoja Akhror Valiy, such scholars and thinkers as Muhammad Khorazmiy, Akhmad Farghoniy, Abu Raikhon Beruniy, Ibn Sino, Mirzo Ulughbek, Ali Kushchi, Alisher Navoi, Zakhiriddin Muhammad Bobur, such artists as Kamolliddin Bekhzod and Makhmud Muzakhkhib, the scenes of historical cities of their birthplace and activity will be demonstrated through rare exhibits. The Usman Copy of the Holy Quran brought by Sakhibkiran Amir Temur to the Uzbek Land will be exhibited in the forecenter of this museum.

During various times and conditions by a stroke of fate many rare manuscripts and archive documents related to the history and culture of the Uzbek Land, as well as religion were taken out abroad. At present, they are being preserved at foundations and museums, scientific and educational institutions of foreign states. Those rare historical items and products of art are considered to be not only priceless wealth of the Uzbek nation, but also the large collections of world significance.

Over the recent period some amount of work has been done to reveal cultural wealth of Uzbekistan being kept in foreign states and comprehensively study them and, to best effort of the Government to return them to the country. This endeavour requires attracting relevant financial and organizational resources, and involving specialists with high scientific potential to the sphere.

In order to realize this important task, at present the Government is working on a draft resolution in terms of establishing a special centre at the Cabinet of Ministers. The main goal behind this idea is to collect even single paper manuscript

[2] *Madrassah* — higher education institution in Uzbekistan, where both secular and religious sciences are taught.

related to history, culture and religion of Uzbekistan and let people and youth see them and bringing up children to be worth of this great heritage.

The work in this direction is raising a keen interest not only in Uzbekistan, but also in foreign states. The prestigious international organizations in the world and Islamic communities, as well as reputed scholars are expressing their willingness to cooperate with Uzbekistan in this regard.

During the Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held in October, 2016 in Tashkent Uzbekistan an initiative to establish an International Scientific and Research Center named after Imam Bukhariy was proposed. Recently a Memorandum of Understanding on this very topic has been signed between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Development Bank. The president of the Bank Bandar Hajjar supported this initiative and emphasized: "The Islamic Development Bank is Uzbekistan's bank". It will be true to say that these words reflect a profound respect of the entire Islamic Ummah, Islamic community, to the homeland of Imam Bukhariy and his descendants.

At the international summit held in Saudi Arabia, heads of Muslim countries and the U.S. have especially underlined one particular idea. Namely, they emphasized the necessity to fight the ignorance by enhancing enlightenment, education and upbringing.

It is remarkable that these ideas coincide and correspond to Uzbekistan's approach to religious issues. In particular, President of the United States Donald Trump put forward specific and constructive proposals in this regard. Uzbekistan's vision is one of peace, security, and prosperity in this region and in the world. Uzbekistan's goal is a coalition of nations who share the aim of stamping out extremism. But states can only overcome this evil if the forces of good are united and strong, said the U.S. President.

The Government of Uzbekistan tries to elevate its activity to a new level by mobilizing all strength and capabilities of state and society for this cause. At present there is no single state or society, which is not concerned of a perilous situation, political and economic crisis reigning across the world. Especially, the entire humanity is deeply worried about international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, religious confrontation, illegal migration, human trafficking, environmental problems, and aggravation of economic misery, unemployment and poverty.

In this extremely complex and dangerous situation all countries must seriously ponder what way to choose, how to maintain peace and tranquillity, ensure sustainable development. At present, the Government of Uzbekistan is taking all measures to prevent youth, especially those citizens, who work abroad from the grips of terrorism and extremism.

Primarily, the Government is paying special attention to developing ties of cooperation with neighbouring countries. The goal of the country is not to compete with them, but strengthen the bonds of cooperation, jointly address common problems. With such an aim, during a short period of time the President of Uzbekistan has visited Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan twice. In addition, visits to the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and Saudi Arabia have been productive, as well.

In the course of the state visit to the Russian Federation Uzbekistan secured an important agreement in the area of labour migration. A position of the Uzbek side in this regard is clear: wherever a person is, he must work, support his family, his

children. At the same time, he must work honestly and make his earning in legal way. Uzbekistan is ready to create all necessary conditions for it.

Currently the improvement of social and moral climate and people's living standards, protection of youth from the influence of various religious extremist groups stands as a major task for the Government of Uzbekistan. In this regard, in many places the authorities promote an initiative to fighting ignorance with enlightenment.

Everybody can see what is happening in some countries. One should make conclusions from the Holy Quran, which says: "Do not throw yourself into destruction with your own hands". Carelessness, apathy will only entails tragedy and bring calamity to children, families and the entire country.

Uzbekistan's great forefathers said: "A child is a valuable gift to parents, whose duty is to carefully safeguard it". And the present day life vividly proves the necessity for all to truly safeguard and protect children and their destiny.

The Government has established the position of a deputy district mayor and deputy head of the district department of interior for working with youth.

The Government officials strive to educate misguided youth and they are working closely with "Nuroniy" and "Mahalla" funds, Women's Committee, "Kamolot" Public Youth Movement, law-enforcement bodies and other relevant institutions taking into account the importance of the following points:

First, studying the living conditions, socioeconomic situation and problems of persons of interest and comprehensively analysing the reasons for their radicalization.

Second, organizing training courses for advisors of makhalla committees, prevention inspectors, imam-khatibs and the relevant law enforcement officers for religious, spiritual, moral and ethical education concentrating on familiarizing them with the methods of activity of religious extremist and terrorist groups, as well as selfish goals and ideas of these groups.

Third, maintaining by deputy mayors in charge of youth affairs, public, religious organizations and women's issues regular dialogue with people end being aware of their daily life, concerns and problems.

Fourth, increasing the responsibility of makhalla chairperson, advisers, district inspectors and imam-khatibs in each makhalla.

Fifth, connecting with morality, behaviour, in a word, worldview of youth given the rapid change of the world.

Sixth, establishing a systematic public control in building a strong civil society.

In Uzbekistan the National Working Group led by the State Adviser to the President of the country for Cooperation with Social and Religious Organizations is undertaking appropriate measures in all regions in order to address the problems identified upon the results of studying the socio-spiritual state of affairs.

Uzbekistan has numerous monuments and scientific centres almost in all regions of the country, which were built in memory of great ancestors and thinkers, who have uniquely contributed to the prosperity of religion.

Scientific schools being established under those centres would train specialists in certain areas of Islam. The Government considers the creation, for instance, a Center of hadith studies at Imam Bukhariy Science and Research Center in

Samarkand, a Center of Kalam[3] studies under Imam Maturidiy Center, a School of Islamic law under Marghinaniy Center in Ferghana, a Center of Tasavvuf[4] studies under Bakhauddin Naqshbandiy Center in Bukhara, a Center of Aqida[5] studies under Abu Muin Nasafiy Center in Kashkadarya.

These schools will serve as a basis for training well-educated imam-khatibs, experts in Islamic studies and, most importantly, raising children in Uzbekistan in the spirit of priceless heritage of great ancestors and a healthy faith.

In preventing grave dangers approaching borders of Uzbekistan and fighting them with enlightenment, mullahs and imams, all religious workers, who work on the path of religion and integrity, undoubtedly, have their own unique place and significance.

Urging youth to avail the favourable conditions created in Uzbekistan for entrepreneurship and start their own business is yet another good deed encouraged by Islam religion.

The Government's efforts are comprehensively consonant and harmonious with the good deeds that sacred religion Islam appeals for.

All-in-all, since the independence in Uzbekistan enormous work has been carried out on strengthening the sovereignty of the country in all areas, in particular, reviving sacred religion Islam, preserving its purity, promoting the religious tolerance, strengthening the climate of interethnic friendship and accord in the society.

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[3] *Kalam* — also known as 'Ilm al-Kalām, literally "science of discourse". Usually foreshortened to Kalam and sometimes called "Islamic scholastic theology".

[4] *Tasavvuf* — often defined as "Islamic mysticism", "the inward dimension of Islam", or "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam".

[5] *Akida* — Islamic (Muslim) belief; the form of unveiling one's iman (belief); "symbol of faith".